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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 004748

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA AND PRM; GENEVA FOR RMA

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TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [LE](#) [JO](#) [UNHCR](#)

SUBJECT: NAQUORA KURDS STUCK IN AMMAN

REF: BEIRUT 1270

Classified By: CDA Doug Silliman for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

1. (U) The nearly two-and-a-half year saga of the "Naquora Kurds," Iraqi Kurds who attempted to seek political asylum in Israel and ended up stranded on the Israeli-Lebanese border under UNIFIL protection (ref), hit a new snag this week when the UN plane carrying the remaining 14 Kurds from Lebanon to Iraq experienced technical difficulties and made an emergency landing at Amman's Marka Airport on June 7. The Dutch Air Force crew piloting the UN plane refused to continue the flight to Iraq after the Kurds reportedly became unruly and refused to return to Iraq. The Dutch Ministry of Defense subsequently supported the crew's decision and instructed the crew not to board the Kurds, citing concerns over the crew's security should the Kurds become unruly mid-flight.

2. (U) Tensions among UNHCR, the Dutch crew, the Kurds and Jordanian airport authorities came to a boil on June 9, when the Kurds agreed to reboard the plane and return to Iraq but Dutch crew members refused to leave Amman. Jordanian airport authorities then impounded the plane and detained the crew and several UNHCR staff members for several hours. According to both UNHCR and Dutch embassy sources, the GOJ insists that the Kurds cannot remain in Jordan and must leave the same way they entered, via the Dutch-crewed UN flight.

3. (C) Ali Al Ayed, Director of FM Muasher's private office, told Charge June 10 that the GOJ is following events closely but is in no hurry to resolve the impasse. The GOJ is confident that it will convince Dutch authorities to allow the crew to ferry the Kurds home to Iraq. UNHCR is pursuing its own efforts to resolve the situation, with the High Commissioner for Refugees scheduled to speak to the Dutch Minister of Defense today, June 10. Should the High Commissioner's efforts prove unsuccessful, UNHCR will try to arrange either a charter flight to Irbil or an overland transfer through the Karameh/Trebil border post. We have informed CPA-Baghdad and HACC-Amman of this possibility and will continue to monitor the situation. UNHCR assures us that the Kurds' planned return is indeed voluntary.

4. (U) CPA Baghdad minimize considered.
SILLIMAN